

Ep #169: The First Step in Real World Peaceful Parenting



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

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Welcome to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*, a podcast for parents that are tired of yelling, threatening, and punishing their kids. Join mom and master certified parent coach Lisa Smith as she gives you actionable step-by-step strategies that'll help you transform your household from chaos to cooperation. Let's dive in.

Lisa: Welcome, welcome, welcome. Welcome to today's episode. In keeping with this year's theme of 2020, for the year of self-regulation, today, I want to take you into a deep dive, into a crucial skill for effective communication with our children. By the way, this also works with partners, bosses, employees, mothers, mother-in-law's, sisters, friends, coworkers, and the neighbor next door.

Today, I'm going to take you into the art of pausing and responding with a panel of parents who happen to also be Hive members and some amazing human beings. They've been where you are right now. They understand the journey of working into pause and respond.

Now let me set the stage before I welcome our guests. As parents, we've all been there, right? Faced with the situation where our immediate reaction might not be the most productive. Maybe it's a tantrum, a power struggle with your kid, a disagreement with your teenager, sibling fighting, or a moment of honest to goodness pure defiance. Can you feel me? I know I've been there.

I know in these moments, your instinct, your urge might be to react impulsively, to react rather than respond. I know it. It happens. It becomes a habit. Maybe it's the household you grew up in. Maybe it's the way you've always operated.

But what if, what if you could learn to take a pause and respond thoughtfully in a productive way? Pause and respond rather than react. Let me just tell you, I want that for you. I want that for your kids.

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Today, with the help of Kate, Dina, and Neil who are all Hive members, and parents and have been on the podcast before. Today, the four of us are going to explore how the skill of pause and respond can completely transform your connection and your interaction with your kids.

Let me say that again. The goal of today's episode is to explore how this skill, and I need you to hear that word, this skill of pause and respond can transform your interaction with your children and create deep connection. It's like any other skill. It's something that can be learned and perfected over time. So welcome Dina, Kate, and Neil. Thank you so much for being here today.

Neil: You're welcome.

Kate: Hello.

Lisa: Awesome. So as Hive members, I've been talking a lot lately. We've been coaching around talking about and digging into how pause and respond is really a skill. I think that when people first joined The Hive, they come in wanting to be able to pause and respond rather than react. But I think they think it's like innate, or you're born with it, or it's something either you've got or you don't.

But one of the things we've been talking about is how it's really a learned skill, much like riding a bike. Right? So Dina, start us off. Tell us about your transformation. Where you started and where you're at now with the skill of pause and respond.

Dina: Thanks for having me, Lisa. To the listener, yes, it is a skill. I'm still on my journey of perfecting this skill are getting much better. I still struggle at times. One of my strong willed daughter, who's nine and a half, her initial reaction to everything is no, like even still at nine and a half. That is one thing that can highly trigger me. In the past, I would just turn around and

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have something come out of my mouth, depending on whatever the situation was.

Lisa: A reaction. You would turn around, and you would react to the no.

Dina: Yep. Something would come out. What do you mean no? What did you just say? Any of that reaction and response would come out. Now, I expect the no to come out. I kind of look at her, take a deep breath, and say okay, I need a minute. Let's talk about this. So there's that slight pause that I'm not reacting to her no. That I'm just acknowledging that's her initial response, and she's entitled to her response. But I'm giving it a moment to set it up for a better conversation versus a power struggle that we'll start to get into because I'm reacting to what she's saying.

Lisa: Yeah, that's great. That's great. Kate, tell us about your experience. Also, if you could comment on how you see that reacting was a skill just like pausing and responding is a skill.

Kate: Lisa, it's like you almost read my mind. So my childhood kind of popped into my head. Reactivity is a skill that I learned from my parents and other adults that I was around. So I've told myself this for a while, but I am in the process of changing this thought of that the reactionary part of me is hardwired into me, but I don't necessarily fully believe that anymore. Because I am slowly over time perfecting the skill of pausing.

For me, pausing looks like taking a very deep breath in. Occasionally, I have to walk away. One tried and true method that I have found so that I don't snap and snarl is that I will say excuse me for a moment. I have to go to the bathroom. Because nobody's going to argue with you when you need to use the restroom. I will go in, and I will take a few deep breaths. I tell myself my child is not a lion. I'm not going to be eaten. Then I'm able to gather myself and go deal with whatever the situation is at hand.

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Lisa: That's beautiful, Kate. Thank you for sharing that. That's wonderful. Neil, tell us about your journey from this skill of react to pause and respond.

Neil: Very similar to what Kate said. She's almost exactly. I think it just shows the kindred nature of this experience that we have as human beings, that when we come up against something that is dysregulating, that is unexpected, that is adverse to the way we're thinking about something, we instantly have this amygdala fight and flight response. Our brain just goes there.

I love that Kate used the word hardwired because I remember using the exact same word in explaining my lack of this skill. You really questioning that and saying that it's not hardwired. That there are thoughts within our brain that causes us to respond and perhaps respond quickly.

As you know, I love pickleball. So just like you learn how to quickly respond and hit back a ball, it's kind of very similar that when something instantaneously happens, you learn that instead of diving right back into a reaction yelling, screaming, throwing something, you do have the ability to also quickly do what Kate just said. I think she incorporated a lot of technologies. I'm also really appreciating what Dina said as well. That it's a skill that we're not masters at yet, but we finally have some tools now to start changing the dial.

Lisa: I agree with you. Listen for the record here, none of us are masters at it 100% of the time, right. One of our biggest mottos inside The Hive is progress over perfection. Nobody is pausing and responding 100% of the time. If you think about it nor would we want us to. Sometimes we are in dangerous situations. A reaction, you're driving on an icy road, and you need to course correct the car. You want to react.

The difference is that no one's hardwired to react to their children's tantruming, storming, defiance, strong wilderness, power struggling,

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fighting, right? You're not hardwired. You're not born into that system or that caste or that culture or that way of being.

You have the ability to rewire your brain, right? You've all heard of neuroplasticity. We have the ability to rewire our brain to be someone that replaces old patterns with new, more constructive ones. This is really I want you, the listener, to hear this. I beg you to really tune into this.

Neuroplasticity allows us to rewire our brains. So Kate said I used to tell myself I was hardwired for this. She's learned that that is 0.0% true. There is a neuroplasticity in the brain that causes some people to react. When you do this work inside The Hive or anywhere else you're doing this work as a parent, you rewire the brain. You replace the old pattern with a new pattern that's more constructive.

It is this simple. It is this simple. Not easy, but it's simple to replace an old pattern with a new more constructive one. So you move away from reacting. You move into pause and then respond, pause and then respond. Okay, so Dina, share your thoughts on that with us.

Dina: As you were just talking about that we model for our children, right. So in the past, my daughter had learned that if she said no, I would react, and that would be. Now she's learning oh, Mom's not going to say anything right now or a minute. I can totally see our communication change. She has her reaction, but now she knows that I'm going to take a pause before I respond to her.

The same thing when I ask something of her. She's like give me a second mom. She's modeling back what I'm trying to do as well, which is pause and stuff. So even sometimes I'm like I'm saying something or too much at her. She's like Mom, I need a minute. It's like okay yep, that just came back at me, you know what I mean? Like I need to like pause and slow down sometimes too.

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But I can totally see the pattern changing. So instead of me reacting, she has her reaction. But then we both pause and settle before we respond and continue that conversation. So the communication and the whole atmosphere is changing for both of us.

Lisa: Totally, totally. What I just heard you say, which I love so much, is as I rewire my brain into a new, useful pattern, I show her the way, and I'm helping wire her brain into the pause and respond as well because she has the neuroplasticity to learn the culture in the home, the habit in the home is we pause and respond.

Dina: Yeah, for sure. Because I didn't like the reactive nature, right? I'm reacting to her. She's reacting to me, and I don't like it. Well, I can only model something different. So now I'm seeing the change come about. We're still learning and working through it, but I can see the changes and baby steps. It's making everything much more peaceful for us.

Kate: I just wanted to also say that in our home, there are times where my child will say I need a minute. That's okay. My child is also learning that it's okay to pause and to breathe and to just take a minute to feel those feelings and then be able to move forward when we've come out of the Red Zone back down to where communication can happen.

Lisa: I love it. It sets the tone, right? You're building the skill. The beauty of this is, and a nail I want to hear your take on this, the beauty of this is, is that think of all the years your kids will have, the hours of practice they will have in building the skill of pause and respond by starting this out in their childhood rather than them having to wait until adulthood.

Neil: Yeah, and something with both Dina and Kate said. I think what I love hearing is that how it's changing the culture for their kids. I have a two and four year old. Sometimes they don't even have the language to express their feelings or even to understand that hey, I have a different option than

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smacking my brother to get attention. It's a learning process. We've had coaching calls together about it's not going to happen overnight, especially with the two and four year old.

Their brains are developing. You wouldn't expect an infant to pause and respond when they would need milk. So our kids are maturing. They're learning that they have control, and they're developing the higher brain to do these things.

But I will say one thing like going back to your point that for me is both realizing the developmental needs of my kids and that expecting them to respond a certain way or be respectful or not shout and yell, even pausing and responding while maybe they're not able to do the same thing to you, it's a powerful tool. Because at least it starts the journey for them that my parent is obtained dysregulated in the same way that I am.

Then the second thing is that as you hear from other parents and as you learn that there's different stages of emotionally reacting when we're in, I think Kate mentioned, like when we're in red, when we're really agitated, to when we're yellow it's boiling, and to when we're in green, it's like we're calm. We can pause and respond much more easily.

Simply having that awareness, even when you are dysregulated and not pausing and responding. At least your higher brain and saying hey, like you remember that pause and respond? Just think about that for a second. Maybe it gives you that. Because before when you believe that you're hardwired, there's not even a realization that you can pause and respond.

Lisa: Yeah, there's low awareness, right? I mean, I will confess this. Yeah, I've been doing this a long time, right? I'm 15 years into pause and respond. Even now when I react, which isn't really very often, but when I do, I know what I'm doing. I may choose to react. Right? I may, but I have

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an awareness that you're speaking about Neil. In the higher part of my brain, I know I am making the decision to do that.

That pause, it's so valuable. I mean, I really believe that if every human being walking the earth had the ability to pause and respond, we would be living on, our earth would look very different. We have a lot of tools today that lead to that impulsivity in that reaction rather than pause and respond. So yes, awareness is really how you get started on this path.

Awareness. It's saying to yourself listener, like Dina and Kate and Neil have had the transition. It's saying okay, I have the skill of reacting right now. I want to replace that with the skill of pause and respond. I want you to think about this like learning to ride a bike. Do you remember it? I sure do.

When you start to ride a bike, at any age, I don't care what age you are when you learn to ride a bike. At first, it feels wobbly and uncertain, right? Like whoa, I don't. Then with practice, it literally becomes second nature. By honing your ability to pause and respond, by practicing it over and over and over again, you get better and better and better at it.

So one of my goals in today's episode and the impetus for inviting Dina Kate and Neil here is for you to see what's possible for you, no matter where you're starting, no matter how reactive you are right now as a parent, no matter how frustrated and angry and low impatience you get with your children. I want you to see what's possible.

All three of these parents, well myself included, so all four of us started out very reactive mode for a variety of reasons. Why you are a reactive parent really doesn't matter. The genesis of it does not matter. What matters is that you say to yourself this is a skill I have. Right now I have the skill of reacting. I can replace that with the skill of pause and respond. It's totally possible. You just get on the bike. You wobble and you practice, you learn

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how to break, you learn how to steer. Before you know it, you're gliding down the road standing up, or look at me I'm hands free, right?

You get there through practice of the skill. It's so important to me, listener, that you hear this as a skill. I want to invite you guys to comment on that. Right? It really solidified for you when you saw it as a skill, not an innate talent or an inherited trait.

Dina: Yeah, like anything, a lot of things that we talk about in The Hive, it's a skill or tool I put in my toolbox. Well, you have to learn to use a tool. You have to practice that skill before you fine tune it. Reactive was a skill, right?

I call it another way to be able to hone this skill for me is reflective. When I do react, well, I go back and go okay, why did I react? What was going on? Why didn't I pause? For me, that's self-learning, right, so that next time I can apply the pause in a similar situation. But for sure, I don't beat myself up. I don't get upset. It's a skill I'm still practicing. The journey is going to continue every day. Every opportunity I have is just another chance for me to hone into that skill more.

Neil: I love what you said, Dina, and especially what you said, the foundation for, Lisa, in terms of skill versus having an inherent trait. Because if you believe you have an inherent trait to be reactive, it creates this low self-worth that you inherently are flawed. So you're not capable of pausing and reacting. Versus if you believe it's a skill then you know you can do it, but it just takes time and effort, like riding a bike.

What Dina mentioned about kind of doing like an after action review is like saying like it's even more powerful because instead of saying I'm flawed, I can't pause and respond. This is the way I grew up. This is the way my parents ingrained this in me. This is a trait that I'll never be able to overcome.

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If you start saying not only can I learn pause and respond and react, but I can, even without anybody else's input, I can almost pause and respond to myself after an instance like Dina was mentioning and say oh, well like what happened? Was I hungry? Was I tired? Was I overworked? Was my child having a bad day, and that set me off? Like I think starting to adopt that mindset both changes your self-worth as well as your ability to get better on your own.

Lisa: Yes, well said. I know a lot of listeners are going to really have a lightbulb moment from what you just shared, Neil. To take it a step further, when you realize it's a skill like riding a bike, I mean, listen, we all fall off our bike once in a while. It happens, right? It happens. You have a little bike accident. You're not paying attention. You hit a bump.

Even as an adult, occasionally you fall off your bike. Just like the bike analogy, if you have a reactive moment, you just dust yourself off, get back on the bike, and keep working on the skill of pause and respond, right? We're all going to fall off the bike once in a while. It happens.

I think if you believe that this is just the way, to use Kate's word hardwired, then you don't want to work on this. It's like you're doomed to be this way. Then you model that for your children. Then you've got a reactive parent and reactive child together. When you've got a reactive storming parent meets a storming child, there's going to be an explosion 100% of the time. Tell us your thoughts on that, Kate.

Kate: Yes, I completely agree with that. I've been on this journey for about four years. There are still times where I will get caught with my guard down and I have a bike wreck, so to speak. I have had to work really hard on not beating myself up for those oopses, those accidents.

When I do have those moments, when I catch myself, I will walk away from the situation so that everybody can take a deep breath and just have some

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air to feel their feelings. Then I focus really hard on repair and recovery. But like you said, this is a skill. We're constantly building that muscle.

Lisa: Yes. I love it. I love it. Okay, so let's talk about this, a total twist now, and the last thing I want to talk about before we wrap up. Here's what I know for sure after almost greater than 15 years of being a parent coach and working with families around the world. When we pause and respond to our children rather than react, we signal to them that their feelings and experiences are important and valued.

They have a sense of validation and security. This simple act of validation can prevent escalations and really help dissipate often feelings of rage, anger, frustration, and disappointment they may be experiencing. So I really think about pause and respond as like an investment that keeps paying off in multiple ways, right? You're calm, you use your higher brain, you model it for your children, they learn it.

But in addition to all of that, your children have a greater opportunity of connection and to feel validated and secure, which we know is important when you choose to build the skill of pause and respond rather than react. Dina, tell us your thoughts on that.

Dina: Yeah absolutely, for sure. The communication changes so much when your child comes to you, and they've had a reactive moment or something, and they can pause and now they understand that you hear them. That you can validate more their feelings, and you're coming to a place together versus like butting heads. So, for sure, the pause, in both situations, helps with bringing the communication together and the connection together.

I would be in a totally different situation with my daughter if I was still having my power control, butting heads with her. I don't know where I would be. I've been here for three years, and it's completely transformed.

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These skills, each one that I learn and this one in particular, has just given me and her more peace and understanding that both of what we feel is valid. She understands that I validate her feelings. It's okay if her she has whatever feelings she wants, how big it is, but we can move through it together.

Lisa: I love that. Validating feelings, I mean that doesn't mean as parents, we're not setting limits. We're not the peaceful leader of the household. We're not being permissive. There still may need to be some repair. There may need to be some new rule set as a result of it. But in the midst of all of that, you're a human being as my child, and I can still take a moment to pause and validate your feelings and your experience for you and not take the situation personally. The pause and respond invites all of that.

Even, listener, if you don't have that right now and you want that, the pause and respond is the step one in the roadmap to getting to the validation of the feelings and the connection, right Neil?

Neil: Yeah. Because when you validate, it almost creates that space where you might not have the immediate answer. You might not even have a clear understanding of what's going on. But at least putting the other person's feelings first and foremost and trying to understand their point of view helps regulate yourself as well as give you a sense of the best way to respond. Rather than just being so caught up in your version of what happened, why it happened, and how it makes you feel.

Lisa: I love that. All right, Kate, share with us your experience in this area, how using the pause and respond and thus the validation of your son's experience contributes to deescalating and potentially dissipating some of the big feelings that come up, like frustration, like anger, like resentment, like rage in these little humans.

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Kate: Yeah, so my son has struggled with very big, big feelings. We have discovered lately that we're working with some different diagnoses, such as ADHD and autism and a few others. Taking a pause and respond approach to him and then also listening to those big feelings, however, they come out, they're messy. They can sting a little bit occasionally.

But when I take the time to listen and deep dive down under the behaviors to the feelings and needs, our home has become so harmonious now that it is a driving force to continue being a member of The Hive, continue working my butt off to change the things that I was taught as a child, to also change future generations. Because with this work, we're not only affecting our children. We are affecting our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren, and our great-great-grandchildren. I hope and pray that our kids carry this forward with them and change the world with this.

Lisa: I know we're all we're all given Kate the heart sign right now. I mean, we're just going to drop the mic right there because I mean that's beautiful. Thank you guys. Thank you all. Thank you, Dina. Thank you, Neil. Thank you, Kate. Thank you, listener. Together, we can build the skill of pause and respond and lead this skill of being reactive behind.

Listen, I can't help but extend the invitation you personally. If you like what you heard today and you want to be in community with these amazing parents, and you want some help and support to build the skill of pause and respond, the Hive is your place and we are your people.

I want you to hear this as my personal invitation to you to come and join us right now. Don't wait. Don't wait another moment. Come and be part of the growing movement of parents building the skill of pause and respond. Thanks for tuning in today. Remember, a moment of pause can lead to a lifetime of connection. So good, right? Okay, until we meet again, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

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Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit thepeacefulparent.com. See you soon.